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ABSTRACT

The growing diversity of school populations demands that administrators possess not only an understanding of the role of culture in creating school climate, but also the skills and desire to apply that knowledge. In addition, there is a need to increase the number of American Indian role models in teaching and educational administration. This paper explores the meanings of culture and world view and their role in creating climate, examines the roles of administrators as cultural mediators, and presents information on programs for American Indians in teaching and educational administration. The paper synthesizes information about educators' personal experiences and research on available programs and offers recommendations for developing preparatory programs that focus on utilizing cultural knowledge to enhance administrator effectiveness. (Contains 20 references.) (LMI)

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Running Head: CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP

The Role of Cultural Understanding in School Leadership

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Abstract

Leadership requires a climate of mutual respect built through a relationship of trust and understanding. Knowledge of both the world view of the individual and the culture of a people is key to building that climate of trust and understanding. The diversity of school populations demands that administrators possess not only an understanding of the role of culture in creating school climate, but also the skills and desire to apply that knowledge.

Cultural value systems create barriers that often prevent minorities from succeeding in school. A review of literature on American Indian education reveals that high administrator turnover rates and low numbers of American Indian faculty are symptomatic of the need for increasing the number of American Indian role models in teaching and educational administration. Although many colleges and universities have programs encompassing Indian education, Indian studies, bilingual and bicultural education, specific programs providing training for Indian educators are few in number.

This paper explores the meanings of culture and world view and their role in creating climate, examines the roles of administrators as cultural mediators, and presents information on programs for American Indians in teaching and educational administration. Synthesized from information on educators' personal experiences and research on available programs, recommendations are proposed for developing preparatory programs that focus on utilizing cultural knowledge to enhance administrator effectiveness. The need for culturally cognizant educators demands that higher education look to the future and evaluate, reorganize, and redesign teacher and administrator preparation programs.

THE ROLE OF CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

The need to prepare American Indian administrators for positions within tribal schools and colleges is clear. Based on the belief that American Indian administrators are better able to understand the needs of American Indian people, programs such as the "American Indian Leadership Program" at Pennsylvania State University, the "Foundations in Native Education Leadership (FINE) Program" at the University of Oklahoma, and the "American Indian Administrator Education Program: Preparing for the Future," a joint venture of South Dakota State University, Brookings, South Dakota, Sinte Gleska University, Rosebud, South Dakota, and Oglala Lakota College, Kyle, South Dakota, have been formulated.

The need for increasing the number of American Indian administrators is difficult to dispute. Information from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (1995) reveals,

> Forty-nine percent of the 141 principals at BIA/tribal schools were White non-Hispanic, while an additional 47 percent were American Indian or Alaska Native....Among the 1,201 principals in public schools with 25 percent or more Indian students enrollment, 79 percent (or 952) were White non-Hispanic and 15 (180) persons) were American Indian or Alaska Native....White non-Hispanic principals also constituted the majority in public schools with low [less than 25%] Indian student enrollment; only one percent were American Indian/Alaska Native. (p. 26)

Turnover rate among administrators in schools with a high Native American population is a major concern. Mills & Amiotte (1995) citing information from the South Dakota Educational Directory reported "...an average tenure of 1.5 years

among school principals on reservations, over the past five years, as opposed to 3 years for all other principals in the state." During the 1994-95 school year, the twenty-three reservation schools employed thirteen principals who were non-Indian. Ten administrative vacancies in a total twenty-two positions caused a near 50% turnover rate at Pine Ridge.

Information from the NCES indicates that 15 percent of school principals in schools that serve American Indian and Alaska Native students "plan to remain in their current positions 'until something better comes along'" and "fewer BIA/tribal school principals plan to remain until retirement (16 percent) than in public schools, and more BIA/tribal schools principals (almost one quarter) are undecided about their future plans" (NCES, 1995, p. 96).

Native American School Population

The National Center for Education Statistics report on Characteristics of American Indian and Alaskan Native Education notes that the American Indian and Alaska Native student population comprises only about one percent of the total student population in the United States (April 1995, p. 1), but the number has grown considerably in the past two decades. Barse (1989) noted that the American Indian youth population ages eighteen to twenty-two grew from 96,000 in 1970 to 234,000 in 1980. Hodgkinson (19--) noted that "While the national population grew 9.8% during the 1980s, certain groups grew very rapidly" with Native American numbers increasing by 37.9%. "While about 22% of the total population can be described as minority, 30% of school-age children are minority, a number that will reach 36% shortly after the year 2000" (p.13).

"According to Richardson (1981), no two culture groups could be so vastly different in value systems than the Native American and the White American"

(Pedersen & Carey p.68). Recognizing that there are differences in the two cultural groups, that the American Indian school-age population is growing, and that not all American Indian students attend BIA/tribal schools, one must also recognize the need to find ways to eliminate the barriers that prevent American Indian students from succeeding in schools. As noted by Tate and Schwartz (Fall 1993), "A lack of American Indian high school graduates is one explanation for the reduced numbers of American Indians in higher education" (p.22). The number of American Indian administrators cannot be increased unless there is a eligible pool of candidates. Just as education programs must prepare administrators and teachers to work within schools of all sizes and schools in all geographical locations, they must prepare them to work with students of varying cultural groups.

The need for more American Indian administrators is indisputable, but this need is symptomatic of a greater need. To better serve the needs of American Indian students and faculty, educational administrators must be educated to understand the American Indian culture and world view. Just as education programs must prepare teachers to work with students of varying abilities, handicaps and talents, within schools of all sizes and in all geographical locations, educational administration programs must prepare prospective administrators with the skills to understand differing cultures and world views. These skills will empower administrators to be better administrators.

Culture and world view

It has become a common error to consider *culture* and *world view* to be equivalent terms. There are two primary reasons that the two terms should not be treated as being synonymous. First, although one's *culture* (related to ethnic background) may be observed in tangible, materialistic representations (artifacts), as

well as in actions and behavior patterns, one's *world view* additionally includes values, opinions, and beliefs from that culture that may not be so readily apparent (Sodowsky, Maquire, Johnson, Ngumga, & Kohles, 1994). Culture may be viewed as anthropological; world view is psychological, a philosophy of life.

Secondly, in addition to ethnic culture, one may belong to many "cultures," including those of work or career, social friendships, and religion. These subcultures may or may not be a part of, and may or may not be parallel to the beliefs of one's ethnic culture; regardless, they do impact one's world view. Equating the terms *culture* and *world view* negates the possibility of the existence of abstruse or obvious differences as well as denying the possibility of one's existence in several cultures. In this context, *culture* is given a very narrow meaning defined primarily by ethnicity, and limits the scope and meaning of *world view*.

Generally, it is accepted that world view is an individual's perspective of one's place in the world. Sue and Sue (1991) explain that world views are "...composed of our attitudes, values, opinions, and concepts, but also they may affect how we think, make decisions, behave, and define events" (1991, p.137). They further explain that in addition to racial and ethnic factors, "...economic and social class, religion, and gender are also interactional components of a world view" (1991,p.137).

In spite of the fact that there will be individual differences in world views, there are similarities that may result from cultural influences and experiences. Axelson (1993) defines this contexting as an encircling "Common Human Experience," encompassing smaller circles of "Specific Cultural Experiences and Individual Experiences," that in totality comprise the views of the unique individual (Axelson, 1993, p.19). Ibrahim (1985) points out, "Our apprehension of

the world and our perceptions of others form our world view and influences our relations with others" (Ibrahim, 1985, p.631). Similarities occur due to socialization experiences; individual differences occur due to individual psychology.

Understanding both the culture of a people and world view of the individual is key to understanding the culture of the school. Chance & Ristow (1990) as quoted in Mills & Amiotte (1995) suggest,

> there is a critical need among administrator hopefuls to develop cultural understandings of specific tribal customs, traditions, needs and expectations before assuming a position with an Indian populated school. They further conclude that appropriate training in the above mentioned areas would help to reduce the alarming rate of principal turnover in those same schools.

The idea that understanding culture is basic to understanding people is not new. Early researchers Boas, Malinowski, and Mead recognized the value of understanding culture. Boas believed,

> that each culture studied had to be approached inductively. If ethnographers approached a culture expecting to understand it through a western framework, they would distort what they saw. Boas believed that anthropologists should study cultures with the intent of learning how each culture was understood by its members (Bogdan and Biklen,1992, p.9).

Malinowski "...insisted that a theory of culture had to be grounded in particular human experiences, based on observations and inductively sought." (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992, p.10). Applying anthropology to U.S. education,

> Mead examined how particular contexts--the kinds of schools she

> categorized as the little red school house, the city school, and the academy--called for particular kinds of teachers and how these teachers interacted with students. She argued that teachers needed to study, through observations and firsthand experiences, the changing contexts of their students' socialization and upbringing in order to become better teachers (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992, p.10).

The need for understanding has not changed since the time of Boas, Malinowski, and Mead; *culture* and *world view* have changed.

The NCES report on Characteristics of American Indian and Alaskan Native Education notes that the American Indian and Alaska Native student population comprises only about one percent of the total student population in the United States (April 1995, p. 1), but the number has grown considerably in the past two decades. Barse (1989) noted that the American Indian youth population ages eighteen to twenty-two grew from 96,000 in 1970 to 234,000 in 1980. Hodgkinson (19--) noted that "While the national population grew 9.8% during the 1980s, certain groups grew very rapidly" with Native American numbers increasing by 37.9%. "While about 22% of the total population can be described as minority, 30% of school-age children are minority, a number that will reach 36% shortly after the year 2000." (p.13)

"According to Richardson (1981), no two culture groups could be so vastly different in value systems than the Native American and the White American" (Pedersen & Carey p.68). Recognizing that there are differences in the two cultural groups, that the Native American school-age population is growing, and that not all Native American students attend BIA/tribal schools, one must also recognize the need to find ways to eliminate the barriers that prevent Native American students

from succeeding in schools. As noted by Tate and Schwartz (Fall 1993), "A lack of American Indian high school graduates is one explanation for the reduced numbers of American Indians in higher education (p.22). The number of Native American administrators cannot be increased unless there is a eligible pool of candidates. Just as education programs must prepare administrators and teachers to work within schools of all sizes and schools in all geographical locations, they must prepare them to work with students of varying cultural groups.

Lack of Training/Preparation

Few administrative programs provide adequate training in culture or cultural experiences for their students. The NCES (April 1995) study revealed that although those administrators serving BIA/tribal schools reported having received specific training in Indian education, the same was not true for the other groups surveyed.

> Overall, most of the principals (87 percent) received training in evaluation and supervision. A higher proportion of principals at BIA/tribal schools reported that they had received inservice training in Indian education administration than principals at public schools (66 percent compared to 22 percent in high Indian enrollment schools and three percent in low Indian enrollment schools. Only 14 percent of the American Indian/Alaska Native principals and two percent of the White non-Hispanic principals at public schools with low Indian enrollment received training in Indian education administration (NCES, p.35).

Although many colleges and universities have programs encompassing Indian education, Indian studies, bilingual and bicultural programs, few have close connections to educational administration programs. Cultural "enrichment"

activities offered by many colleges and universities are optional and, therefore, bypassed by busy students.

According to Tippeconnic (1984), the administrator in reservation schools "often serves as the link between the school, the community, and the tribe. This role is especially difficult and delicate; it requires political as well as human relations skills." A "sensitive commitment to the special needs of this educational environment, establishment of community/tribal rapport, and knowledge and application of information and guidance as well as funding resources..." can assist in meeting needs (p. ???). Similarly, the administrator in public schools will need special knowledge and assistance in meeting the needs of minority students.

A First Step

A logical solution for meeting the demand for administrators who can meet the needs of a particular culture is to draw from the resources within that culture. To this end programs can and have been established. In 1970, The Pennsylvania State University College of Education instituted "American Indian Leadership Programs" to provide M.Ed, Ed.D., D.Ed., and Ph.D. degrees to American Indian students. During 23 years of operation (1970 to 1992), 194 individuals participated in the program; 143 degrees were conferred comprising a 74% success rate (Goins, 1994).

In the early 1980s, the Foundations in Native Education Leadership (FINE) Program was developed at the University of Oklahoma to (among other goals) "...provide a vehicle for professional development and placement for future Native American school administrators..." (Barse, 1989, p.139). The two components of the program include a master's degree program for elementary and secondary administration and a four-year doctoral program for Native American educators in the areas of elementary administration, secondary school administration, staff

development, higher education, and educational administration. Students in the program receive a fellowship that includes a living allowance, including a dependency allowance, a tuition fee waiver, and a book allowance (Barse, 1989).

The previously mentioned South Dakota program, "American Indian Administrator Education Program: Preparing for the Future," is a partnership of the state land-grant university and two tribal colleges. Coursework for the 36 hour program leading to a master's degree in educational administration is delivered at the tribal college facilities. Faculty from SDSU team with Native American adjunct faculty who are either K-12 educators or tribal college faculty. In addition, students complete summer coursework at the South Dakota State University Campus and internships in their school settings. The project is funded through a grant from the Bush Foundation (Mills and Amiotte, 1985).

Programs such as these serve to fill the need of providing more American Indian administrators and provide other benefits as well. The Carnegie Report (1990) summarized these benefits:

> Both Indian and non-Indian colleges are strengthened when they work together. Cooperative programs improve student education, promote faculty development, build bridges of understanding, and result in students who have skills and confidence to work or continue their studies at non-Indian institutions (p.62).

Both types of institutions gain from these ventures and bridges toward further communication and cultural understanding are built. Instructors as well as students benefit from these programs. Mills, a former SDSU faculty member, explained,

> Teaching in this program was one of the greatest teaching

> experiences of my career because of the very positive exposure to an unfamiliar culture. I know I learned more than the students did...knowing the way I context the world is not necessarily the same way others context the world...others perceive the world differently and that it's okay for them to do that. There can't be any argument with the fact that the greater understanding an educator has regarding the Native American culture, the more effective that educator will be (Mills, 1996).

Amiotte, director of the SDSU/Sinte Gleska/Oglala Lakota program described the program benefits:

> This program allows use of the values of the community to form a philosophy of administration that will serve the Indian student. The program instructors have all mentioned they've come to a realization of the problems that they didn't realize existed, such as poverty. It has killed stereotypes and brought a realization of the advanced training of teachers in these schools; there are good, qualified people who can fill administrative positions (Amiotte, 1996).

The Next Step

Although administrative certification of American Indian professionals may begin to address the need of filling vacant positions and the turnover rate in these schools, in all probability the number of such individuals needed will not be met by just these few programs. Nor does it does address the need of better preparing non-American Indian administrators who may work in reservation schools or with American Indian populations in public schools. Higher education must look to the future and evaluate, reorganize, and redesign preparatory programs to meet this

need. Prospective teachers and administrators must be educated in using culturally relevant models and strategies. They must be equipped with a working knowledge of ethnographic techniques to help them gain an understanding of the school and community culture. Badwound and Tierney (1988) propose a cultural model as an alternative view to an organization: "Rather than rely on rational goals or politically-inspired social structures, proponents of a cultural model seek to understand the reality of the organization from the participant's point of view, and construct effective decision-making strategies" (p.15).

Gilliland (1988) sums up the importance of cultural understanding:

> We must lead our students to understand that though cultures are different, no one culture is superior or inferior to another; that each not only is best for the people within that society, but that each culture benefits our society as a whole; that we all benefit from the ethnic and cultural diversity of American society. We must work toward the continuing development of a society which has a wholesome respect for the intrinsic worth of every individual. We must make allowances for difference. Let people be glad to be different (p. 21).

Rather than seeing cultural differences as barriers to education, we must seek both cultural and individual (world view) understanding as a vehicle to providing the best education possible for all students. The reality of the school must be seen from the American Indian point of view. When the need to educate about culture--the similarities as well as the differences--and to understand the individual from this perspective is recognized, and when educational administration programs include this education as part of their curriculum, the move toward providing appropriate education for all students will have begun.

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